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SUBJECT: IRAQI ARMY RAID ON TURCOMAN VILLAGE - TWO DEAD, SEVERAL
INJURED

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CLASSIFIED BY: Michael Oreste, PRT Team Leader, REO Kirkuk,
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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A mid-march Iraqi Army (IA) raid in predominately Turcoman village near the At Tamim - Salah ad Din provincial border results in two deaths, several injuries, and alleged widespread destruction of property. Turcoman frustration increases to what they perceive as an excessive military response. End Summary.

IRAQI ARMY RAID ON TURCOMAN VILLAGE

¶2. (SBU) IPAOs met separately with Kirkuk Provincial Council Member and head of the Turcoman Eli Party Ali Mahdi Sadiq; Sirwan Samad, a reporter working for a USG funded television station; and Major General Anwar, operational commander of Iraqi Army) forces in Kirkuk Province. The meetings were held to discuss the IA raid on Yengija Village in mid March.

¶3. (SBU) The village is located approximately ninety kilometers south of Kirkuk just inside the province of Salah ad Din. The village has more than 1600 residences and approximately 12,000 citizens. The area is considered a "Turcoman village," although Sunni Arabs and some Kurds also live there.

IRAQI ARMY PERSPECTIVE

¶3. (C) The Iraqi Army 3rd Battalion is based just outside Yengija, and insurgents over the past four months have killed thirteen soldiers and injured fifteen soldiers on a three-kilometer stretch of road running through the village. A bomb that detonated inside the village's security tower the day before the security raid caused the three most recent deaths. General Anwar stated that IA forces received intelligence that Ansar al Islam terrorists were residing in the village. Some claim IA forces delivered a message to village leaders the day before the raid demanding that the villagers turn over terrorists operating in the area. General Anwar, however, stated that the Iraqi Army and village leaders - including the mayor - agreed to a military solution to oust the terrorists prior to the raid.

14. (C) During the raid two innocent civilians were killed in, what Anwar refers to as "an exchange of gunfire". He stated that it is unclear whether insurgents or IA forces were responsible. During the operation residences were torched, beatings took place, and many citizens' possessions were stolen or destroyed. General Anwar admitted that "mistakes had been made" but insisted that the four terrorists the IA was targeting and their sympathizers within the village caused most of the damage. He stated that the terrorists were tipped off and fled the village during the raid.

15. (C) General Anwar noted that a Turcoman officer led the raid and no arrests were made. The Iraqi Army has established dialogue with village leaders, as well as a committee to determine fair compensation to the family members of those killed and those affected by the raid. (Note. Coalition forces conducted an investigation several days after the incident took place and reported the following: "our conclusion is that the operation did occur without proper authorization and may have resulted in damage to some property but there is nothing to suggest that the damage was excessive or malicious". End Note.)
TURCOMAN PERSPECTIVE

16. (C) Mahdi's version of events includes a long list of "atrocities" committed by IA forces, including the destruction of generators, electricity transformers, farm equipment, and the mutilation of livestock. He stated that IA forces in the area are "over ninety percent Kurdish." Mahdi warned that although the Turcoman are without a militia, they are considering arming themselves for protection. He attributed the attacks on IA forces to Salam, a smaller Sunni Arab village down the road from Yengija.

JOURNALIST PERSPECTIVE

17. (C) The journalist who arrived in the village shortly after the raid confirmed that many homes were damaged, items were

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stolen, and people were injured. He noted extremist graffiti on walls and homes filled with Koranic verses, which indicated an Islamic extremist presence in the village. It was his belief that former Sunni Ba'athists (Turcoman and Arab) were most likely responsible for the attacks on the IA. He also noted that there were incidents of Turcoman attacking local Kurds saying that they were spies for the Coalition. (Note. The journalist - a Kurd - has a reputation for being "independent" but previously spent a long career working for PUK publications. End Note.)

COMMENT

Yengija probably was a legitimate security threat to the IA, but it seems that the IA may have overstepped what should have been an appropriate military response. We do not have enough information to determine how much ethnic tensions played into this event, but do not rule out the strong possibility that such friction fueled the fire, especially in this region where Iraq's three largest ethnicities co-mingle. The Turcoman threat of arming themselves for protection is one that is heard with increasing frequency as their frustration mounts.
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